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Memoir of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.

It was a proud compliment paid to literature when the first title of honour conferred by his present majesty after his accession to the throne, was the dignity of a baronet of the united kingdom conferred on that distinguished writer, Walter Scott. There was also something peculiarly delicate in the way in which the honour was conferred; the poet was not huddled among a *batch*, as it is called, of new creations—of persons who however amiable in life, are only known in their immediate neighbourhood; no, the name of Sir Walter stood alone in that *Gazette* which announced his elevation to the baronetcy of Great Britain. Nor in the whole republic of letters could a person have been selected more worthy of this mark of royal favour, for whether we consider him as a poet or a historian, a critic or a novelist, he ranks among the first men of the age of any country, while the amenity of his manners and his private worth have secured him the esteem of all who have the honour of his acquaintance.

To an author who has written on all subjects like Sir Walter, and who has touched nothing that he has not adorned, it may be difficult to say which of his works will be most esteemed by posterity; it may however be sufficient for him to reflect that the measure of his fame is full while he lives, and that his brows are bound with that wreath which too often only adorns the bust.

Poetry and poverty have so long been associated in common parlance, that the latter has been considered the inseparable attendant of the former; that their alliance has been sufficiently frequent to warrant such an idea, is too true, though in the present age we happily see numerous instances of their being unconnected. Not to mention poets among lords, and that lord among poets—the immortal Byron, or the poetic banker, Rogers, or many others, who born in affluence, have cultivated the muses successfully, we might point out several living authors including poets, who have raised themselves to wealth and a distinguished rank in society by their literary talents. No individual, however, has been so successful in this respect as the

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subject of this memoir, who is a striking exception not only to the too general rule of poverty and poetry being associated, but to another and equally well-founded remark, that prosperity and affluence induce lethargy or luxurious ease, and thus deaden intellectual exertion.

In the lottery of life, there are, perhaps, no adventures that contain so many blanks and so few prizes as those belonging to the muses, and it is equally certain that many who with great difficulty have obtained these prizes, are either so worn out by the exertion, or so disgusted that they sit down, count their gains, and live on them rather than hazard fame or fortune by another chance. This, however, has not been the case with Sir Walter Scott, the ore which he has discovered and accumulated in the mines of poesy, so far from deadening his steps by its weight, has actually proved an incentive, and urged him on the quicker; and although fortune furnished the means of indulging in all the luxuries of life, his genius spurred on by success continues to emit its radiance from a silken couch as much as it could have done if goaded by necessity, it had been surrounded by the more usual association of an exalted attic and a three-legged stool. Happy it is for Sir Walter Scott and his family that he has done so, and that while his wealth was accumulating his exertions were unrelaxed, for in the recent whirlwind of commercial credit which has involved houses of the first eminence in its vortex, Sir Walter has been a severe sufferer, and a fortune earned by daily care and midnight toil, has to a great extent been lost at one fell swoop. His mind is, however, superior to misfortune, and retains all its vigour and elasticity, so that he will, we doubt not, rapidly repair his shattered fortunes.

Sir Walter Scott, Bart. was born on the 15th of August, 1771, and is the eldest surviving son of Walter Scott, Esq. writer to the signet in Edinburgh, by Elizabeth, daughter of David Rutherford, Esq. who was a very able and popular practitioner of the same learned profession. Whether the subject of this memoir “lispd in numbers” or not, we cannot say, but as his mother was the

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author of several poems of considerable merit, and was intimate with Burns, Blacklock, and Allan Ramsay, it is probable she had no small share in cherishing and exciting the germ of poetry which existed in the youthful bosom of our hero.

The name of Scott has, however, often been associated with the Muses in Caledonia. There was a Sir John Scot, at whose expense the *Delicia Poetarum Scotieorum*, edited by Dr. Arthur Johnston, in the early part of the seventeenth century, was published. There was also a contributor to the work of the name of John Scott. Sir William Scott, of Thirllestane, Bart. was the friend and contemporary of Allan Ramsay, and wrote a poetical inscription for that poet in Latin, which, with other pieces by him in the same language, was published in Dr. Pitcairne's *Selectior Poemata*; we have also another instance, and that an individual of the same name as the subject of this memoir.

In 1686, there appeared a work entitled, "A True Historie of several Honourable Families of the Right Honourable Name of Scot, in the shires of Roxburgh and Selkirk, and others adjacent; gathered out of the ancient chronicles and traditions of our fathers. By Captain Walter Scott,

"An old souldier, and no scholler,
And one that can write wauo,
But just the letters of his name."

Although "no scholler," Captain Walter Scott has contrived to give his "true historie" in rhyme; it has, however, been reserved to other times to give true poetical immortality to the name of "Walter Scott."

The subject of our memoir, after receiving the first rudiments of education under the guidance of his mother, was sent to the High School, Edinburgh, where he had for his tutor Dr. Adam, who raised the school very much in public estimation by his talents and attention. He was afterwards sent to the university, where he studied under the justly celebrated Professor Stewart.

After serving a clerkship to a writer of the Signet, Walter Scott was, on the 11th of July, 1792, regularly called to the Bar, and, through the interest of the Buccleugh family, to whom he was related, after having received the appointment of sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire, on the 16th of December, 1799, he obtained the situation of one of the principal clerks of the Session in Scotland, some time in March, 1806. In 1798, he married Miss Carpenter, a native of France, by whom he has a family of four children.

The valuable appointment of clerk of the Session was originally intended to be bestowed on Mr. Scott by Mr. Pitt, whose death, by dissolving the then administration before the warrant had passed the seals, annulled all that had been done, as well as all that had been intended. A ministry, however, comprising such men as the late Charles James Fox, Brinsley Sheridan, the present Marquis of Lansdown, Earl Grey, Lord Erskine, and many others attached to the graces of literature and philosophy, at least as much as to the mazes of politics and political economy, was not to be deterred from fulfilling the wishes of their great rival and predecessor, in encouraging and rewarding talent and poesy, merely because the object of those wishes (Mr. Scott) had expressed his hostility to the principles and the practices they professed and pursued. On the contrary, in a manner that did them infinite honour, they voluntarily presented their poetical opponent with the place which had been intended for him, and by thus giving effect to the wishes of their predecessor, occasioned a witty and eloquent lawyer, lately deceased, to observe, in his dry but forcible way, that it was "*the Last Lay of the Ministry.*"

Unlike many of his celebrated and eminently-talented contemporaries, Scott's genius was not precocious. He did not in his boyhood discover any peculiar trait of natural ability, and had not the circumstances we have already referred to, of his mother's attachment to poetry and acquaintanceship with poets, as well as his incapacity for other pursuits by his lameness, driven him to literature and the Muses, it is a fair presumption that the advocacy of legal causes at the Scottish bar would have been the summit of Sir Walter's ambition.

Mr. Scott had attained the age of twenty-five before he ventured to prefix his name to any of his productions. The first which appeared was elicited more by the urgent solicitations of his friend Mr. Erskine, than by any thirst for fame or hope for fortune. In order to feel his way before he ventured to launch into the great ocean of literature, and to brave alike the rocks of criticism and the quicksands of a vitiated taste, he spread his sails under a foreign flag, and published two poems in one volume, with the titles of "*The Chase,*" and "*William and Mary,*" ballads from the German; the preface to which was written by Mr. Erskine. It would be a pleasant, though, perhaps, an useless task, to trace the romantic feeling, chivalrous incident, and glittering description of his later and

more popular productions to their earliest source, otherwise we are persuaded that few men can peruse this little work without discovering the elements of those peculiarities in a faint degree, and in an undigested state, which have since been so powerfully displayed in his various poetical publications.

His next essay was "Goet of Berlenchingen," a tragedy of considerable power, but inheriting all the vices of the school to which it belonged, which appeared in 1799, translated from the German of Goethe, by W. Scott, Esq.; and at nearly the same period he contributed the two romantic and interesting ballads, called "The Eve of St. John," and "Glenfinlas," to Lewis's "Tales of Wonder."

"The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" appeared next in 1802, and was the first proof which Mr. Scott gave of his having acquired sufficient confidence to hazard a work of considerable consequence to the notice of the world. He was not, however, disappointed; it was read with universal interest, and received with unanimous approbation; still our poet leaned upon others for support, and was far more a compiler than an author in the production of this valuable work. It is only fair to observe, that the publication of many of the pieces thus redeemed from the oblivious stream of Lethe, displayed a far greater love for the rust of antiquity than the beauties of poetry, as several are rough, inharmonious, and altogether unpoetical; yet all possess a charm, arising from their associations, and from their accurate elucidation of a most interesting portion of border history.

The studies of Mr. Scott at this period were entirely antiquarian; he lived and breathed only among the knights, the heroes, the monks, and the robbers of olden times; the feats of chivalry, and the rough heroism of northern warfare and border feuds, were the scenes on which his soul delighted to dwell. He drank deeply of the stream of history as it darkly flowed over the middle ages, and his spirit seemed for a time to be imbued with the mysteries, the superstitions, and the romantic valour, which characterised the then chieftains of the north country.

He did not, however, neglect the Muses, for in 1804 he gave to the public "Sir Tristrum, a Metrical Romance of the thirteenth century, by Thomas of Ercildoune." The fame of this work was, however, soon eclipsed by one of the most splendid, rich, and original poems Mr. Scott has ever produced.

"The Lay of the Last Minstrel," which appeared in 1805, is one of the first, and has been one of the most suc-

cessful attempts, made by modern hands, to revive the old English character and style of poetry, and decorate it with the more refined beauties of the present state of our language. The manners, the pursuits, the vices, and the virtues of the ancient chivalry of Scotland, are admirably delineated; the characters of the *dramatis personæ*, and the description of the scenery, are richly and vividly presented to the view; and the introduction of the author's ancestry into the piece, giving it a portion almost of his identity, and eliciting all the powerful enthusiasm of his glowing imagination, swells the picture into reality, and we feel in a world where romance, religion, individual valour, priestly lore, and *lady-love*, by turns enchant, delight, and exalt the mind. This poem, however, does not deserve the meed of unqualified praise; it cannot be beheld with approbation without associating it with the times in which its heroes flourished, fought, and fell; it gives no just picture of the human heart, or the workings of any human passion, abstractedly; on the contrary, it is strictly confined to the most artificial of manners, and the most artificial of ages in the annals of history. Hence, it will never be read by an individual, unacquainted with the period it alludes to, with any considerable portion of sympathy or delight; it is merely a glittering and powerful description of a peculiar age, dressed in all the meretricious decorations which chivalric actions, splendid religious ceremonies, and romantic feelings and performances, bestow upon it.

A volume of Ballads and Lyrical Pieces was published by Mr. Scott in the same year as the "Lay of the Last Minstrel;" but "Marmion, a Tale of Flodden Field," which was first published in 1808, was his next great production. The recollection of the intense interest which his previous productions had elicited, was sufficient to excite the immediate curiosity of the whole world of critics, ladies and literati, to this poem. The novelty and boldness of the attempt, to unite the old ballad style with the beauties of modern poetry, had partially worn off; and those who had been previously struck dumb with admiration, were somewhat abated in their transports, by beholding the same artificial charms, the same ingenious adaptations, and the same romantic and interesting incidents presented to their view. They felt the absence of the nobler and more natural merits of poetry, the development of passion, the strong and intense feelings of the human heart, and the elementary principles of imaginative power. They

found a beautiful, sparkling, and highly decorated work, but divested, as they conceived, of the true essence of poetry; hence, a great northern luminary denounced it as encouraging an unworthy species of composition, and as being unnatural, artificial, and abounding with faults.

"The Lady of the Lake," the first edition of which appeared in 1810, is decidedly the best, as well as the most popular of our author's productions. The "*Lay*," a disjointed, unconnected story, with beauties, rich, powerful, and original, scattered within it like the coruscations of a comet, or, rather, the transient but splendid emissions of the aurora borealis, cannot be read throughout at a sitting without weariness; but this poem possesses all the deep interest of a well-imagined romance, and all the shewy and sparkling scenery of a well-got-up pantomime. Its characters are the most productive sources of delight to all readers of works of imagination. Knights, nuns, and nobles, monarchs, monks, maniacs, and minstrels, hardy and desperate rebels, warlike and courageous soldiers, with ladies peering in beauty, and chieftains shining in chivalry. Its descriptions are also of the most fascinating nature; deep glens, majestic mountains, foaming rivulets, towering castles, impregnable fastnesses, interminable forests, beautiful lakes and fanciful scenes of all kinds, exist in plenteous profusion, and comprise such a variety of incidents in feasting and fighting, praying and prophesying, loving, marrying, conquering, and triumphing, that we marvel not at the popularity which an excellent romance, written in such a brilliant style, should have obtained in this novel-reading country.

"The Vision of Don Roderick" appeared in 1811, and was intended by its author to commemorate the achievements of the Duke of Wellington and the British army in Spain, as well as to please the youthful, by interweaving a curious and romantic fairy tale, or, rather, an entertainment for a night in Arabia, written in the Spenserian stanza. There are many passages of peculiar power and lively interest in this poem, but as a whole it is inferior to his other works.

The poem of "*Rokeby*" was published at the latter end of 1812. It comprises, in an eminent degree, all the beauties and all the defects of Mr. Scott's poetry. Not so bustling and animated as the "*Lady of the Lake*," it is sufficiently so to render the plot and incidents alone highly entertaining; and, independent of the charm arising from the melody and mechanical smoothness of the

verse, as well as the vividness and sprightliness of the descriptions, it possesses the merit of being, both in language, character, and scenery, a powerful and accurate delineation of the manners of our ancestors, in the sixteenth, and towards the commencement of the seventeenth century.

In the summer of 1814, Mr. Scott undertook a maritime expedition, and the associations which the surrounding scenery awoke in his imagination led him to compose a poem, containing a variety of sea-pieces, differently, but all very beautifully sketched; entitled "*The Lord of the Isles*," which appeared in the same year, but it failed to excite equal interest or acquire equal popularity, with its distinguished predecessors. The interest of the story consists in a sort of illegitimate tragedy—woe without passion, and elevation without dignity. The peculiar merits it possesses, are in the beautiful descriptions, the rich and glowing colouring, and the energy of some of the narrations, with which it abounds.

This is the last great original poem of our Northern Bard; but in 1815 he published a smaller production, "*The Battle of Waterloo*," which was a complete failure: besides these acknowledged works, he published anonymously the "*Bridal of Triermain*," and "*Harold the Dauntless*," two poems of nearly equal excellence to any of his avowed publications, yet not having the magic of his name, they fell almost lifeless from the press; and it was only when they were known to be written by, and universally attributed to this fashionable poet, that they excited interest.

In addition to the works we have mentioned, Sir Walter has produced "*Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*;" "*Border Antiquities of England and Scotland*;" and has edited, "*The Works of John Dryden*;" "*Lord Somers' Collection of Tracts*;" "*Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers*;" "*Poetical Works of Anna Seward*;" "*The Works of Jonathan Swift*;" and "*The Edinburgh Annual Register*," which he edited. He has also published several volumes of the *English Novelists*, with critical essays and biographical memoirs.

But high as Sir Walter Scott may rank as a poet, or acute as he may be as a critic, it is in works of fiction that his fame principally rests. We need scarcely say we allude to the novels by the author of "*Waverley*," which have created a new era in this species of composition, and rescued it from the degradation into which it had sunk. We are aware that his claim to the authorship of these cele-

brated productions has been often disputed, and he has not, himself, avowed it; there has, however, long been sufficient evidence, external and internal, to establish the fact beyond all doubt. That he may have received some assistance in these works is not improbable, but that they all passed through his hands and received the touch of his master-hand, is certain. One circumstance of recent occurrence is decisive on that point.

During the late calamity which fell upon the book trade, the first printer and the first bookseller in Edinburgh, failed; one was the printer and the other the publisher of the Scotch Novels, and in the arranging of their accounts, Sir Walter Scott verified his claim as proprietor of all the novels by the author of "Waverley." The "Tales of my Landlord," "Rob Roy," &c. Nay, more, we can state that a person who is well known to the writer of this memoir saw a great portion of the romance of "Ivanhoe" in the hand-writing of Sir Walter Scott.

Of the extraordinary merit of the Scotch Novels, it is unnecessary to speak; they are read and admired by all classes of society; and the production of a new work by the author of "Waverley" is quite an epoch in literature, and for some time after nothing else is read or talked of. Another compliment has been paid these works, they have been translated into French, German, and we believe, Italian, and are sought after with such avidity in America, that the moment a copy arrives at New York, every printing press in the city is employed upon it, and a "Waverley" novel of three volumes has been printed in, we believe, a day or two. Sometimes, however, the work is forwarded in sheets as printed in Scotland, and it is a singular fact that the American edition of one of these novels contains a chapter more than the Scotch edition; this chapter having been printed and sent to America, but afterwards suppressed in the original copy, by the author.

There is another amusing incident connected with these novels; so prolific is their author that at every Leipsic fair, for many years, the booksellers have had a new novel by the author of "Waverley" ready translated into German. About three years ago, however, the fair was approaching, and no new Scotch novel appeared; when an artful bookseller not wishing to lose the greatest attraction at this annual mart of literature, employed a clever writer to produce a work which was published in German as "Walladmoor," translated from the English, by the author "Waverley;" the bait took, and was the fraud discovered until the

edition was sold off. "Walladmoor" has since been translated into English, and though far inferior to the productions of a Scott, really possesses considerable merit.

Various statements have been put forth of the sale of the Scotch novels, but some of them are so grossly exaggerated as to be perfectly ridiculous. In the "Monthly Magazine," for instance, there was a very nice calculation of paper, printing, &c. by which the writer drew the sage conclusion that Sir Walter Scott got £50,000. per annum by his novels alone, although he never produced more than two in a year; so close indeed is the calculation made that the clear profit of each novel is estimated at £20,015.

In "Pichot's Historical and Literary Tour," published in 1825, there is a statement much nearer the truth. It is that 20,000 copies of each novel have been published, and that from the year 1814 to 1822, a period of eight years, Mr. Constable had paid the author 1,500,000 francs, or £62,500.

The last novel by the author of Waverley, "Woodstock," appearing at an unfavourable time, has not been so productive as some of its predecessors, and Sir Walter Scott, who printed it on his own account, only received 6,800 guineas for the 8,500 copies of the work which constituted the first edition. It is said, and we believe truly, that of "Waverley," 30,000 copies were sold.

To leave the author and return to the man; Sir Walter Scott is simple and unassuming in his manners, and is fond of rural life and rural amusements; he rises early, takes much exercise, and though, like Lord Byron, lame in one of his feet, both in walking and riding often wearies his stoutest companions; in riding he manages his steed with the most complete mastery, and is always foremost in the leap; his frame is stout, and he is in general very healthy.

Sir Walter is prudent without being avaricious, and generous without being prodigal; many circumstances of his life are recorded in the hearts of his friends, which exemplify the noblest and the purest benevolence; and all who have the pleasure of knowing him, say, that he is as eminent for his private worth, as he is distinguished for his literary talents. The character of Sir Walter Scott, is, however, so finely drawn by Mr. Lockhart, (since become his son-in-law), in "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk," that we cannot do better than close our memoir with the animated portrait.

"The common language of his features expresses all manner of discernment and

acuteness of intellect, and the utmost nerve and decision of character. He smiles frequently, and I never saw any smile which tells so eloquently the union of broad good humour, with the keenest perception of the ridiculous—but all this would scarcely be enough to satisfy one in the physiognomy of Walter Scott. And, indeed, in order to see much finer things in it, it is only necessary to have a little patience,

—“And tarry for the hour,
When the wizard shows his power;
The hour of might and mastery,
Which none may shew but only he.”

“In the course of conversation, he happened to quote a few lines from one of the old Border Ballads, and, looking round, I was quite astonished with the change which seemed to have passed over every feature of his countenance. His eyes seemed no longer to glance quick and grey from beneath his impending brows, but were fixed in their expanded eye-lids with a sober solemn lustre. His mouth, (the muscles about which are at all times wonderfully expressive), instead of its usual language of mirth, or benevolence, or shrewdness, was filled with a sad and pensive earnestness. The whole face was tinged with a glow that shewed its lines in new energy and transparency, and the thin hair parting backward, displayed in tenfold majesty his Shakespearian pile of forehead.

“It was true that I recognized the true stamp of nature on the poet of *Marmion*—and looking back for a moment to the former expression of the same countenance, I could not choose but wonder at the facility with which one set of features could be made to speak things so different. But, after all, what are features, unless they form the index to the mind? and how should the eyes of him who commands a thousand kinds of emotion, be themselves confined to beam only with the eloquence of a few?—

“It was about the Lammas tide,
When husbandmen do win their hay;
The doughty Douglas he would ride
Into England to drive a prey.”

I shall certainly never forget the fine heroic enthusiasm of look, with which he spoke these lines—nor the grand melancholy roll of voice, which shewed with what a world of thoughts and feelings every fragment of the old legend was associated within his breast. It seemed as if one single cadence of the ancestral strain had been charm enough to transport his whole spirit back into the very pride and presence of the moment, when the White Lion of the Percies was stained

and trampled under foot beside the bloody rushes of Otterbourne. The more than martial fervours of his kindled eye, were almost enough to give to the same lines the same magic in my ears; and I could half fancy that the portion of the Scottish blood which is mingled in my veins, had begun to assert, by a more ardent throb, its right to partake in the triumphs of the same primitive allegiance.

“His conversation is for the most part of such a kind, that all can take a lively part in it, although, indeed, none that I ever met with can equal himself. It does not appear as if he ever could be at a loss for a single moment for some new supply of that which constitutes its chief peculiarity, and its chief charm; the most keen perception, the most tenacious memory, and the most brilliant imagination, having been at work throughout the whole of his busy life, in filling his mind with a store of individual traits and anecdotes, serious and comic, individual and national, such as it is probable no man ever before possessed—and such, still more certainly, as no man of great original power ever before possessed in subservience to the purposes of inventive genius. A youth spent in wandering among the hills and valleys of his country, during which he became intensely familiar with all the lore of those grey-haired shepherds, among whom the traditions of warlike as well as of peaceful times find their securest dwelling-place—or in more equal converse with the relics of that old school of Scottish cavaliers, whose faith had nerved the arms of so many of his own race and kindred—such a boyhood and such a youth laid the foundation, and established the earliest and most lasting sympathies of a mind which was destined, in after years, to erect upon this foundation, and improve upon these sympathies, in a way of which his young and thirsting spirit could have then contemplated but little. Through his manhood of active and honoured, and now for many years of glorious exertion, he has always lived in the world, and among the men of the world, partaking in all the pleasures and duties of society as fully as any of those who had nothing but such pleasures and such duties to attend to. Uniting, as never before they were united, the habits of an indefatigable student with those of an indefatigable observer—and doing all this with the ease and careless grace of one who is doing so, not to task, but to gratify his inclinations and his nature—is it to be wondered that the riches of his various acquisitions should furnish a never-failing source of admiration, even to those who have known him longest, and who

know him best? As for me, enthusiastic as I had always been in my worship of his genius—and well as his works had prepared me to find his conversation rich to overflowing in all the elements of instruction as well as of amusement—I confess the reality entirely surpassed all my anticipations, and I never despised the maxim *Nil admirari* so heartily as now."

ON PRESENCE OF MIND.

(For the Mirror.)

PRESENCE of mind may be defined "a readiness to turn to good account the occasions for speaking or acting." It is an advantage that often has been wanting in men of the most accomplished knowledge.

Presence of mind requires an easy wit, a proper share of cool reflection, a practice in business, an intuitive view according to different occurrences, memory and sagacity in disputation, security in danger; and in the world, that liberty of heart which makes us attentive to all that passes, and keeps us in a condition to acquit ourselves judiciously in every exigency.

We read and admire the traits of this valuable quality which history has handed down, but greatly doubt whether, much as we may be disposed to praise its exercise, it is attainable by any ordinary impulse of the mind. At any rate the subject would prove too discursive for the limits of an essay.

A few striking instances of its occurrence will perhaps interest the readers of the MIRROR. The caliph, Hégiage, we are told, whose cruelties rendered him the abhorrence of his people, was wont to traverse incognito, the extensive provinces of his empire; one day, unattended, and without any mark of distinction, he met with an Arab of the desert, and after some discourse with him, "Friend," said he, "I would be glad to know from you what sort of a man this Hégiage is, of whom so much is said." "Hégiage," answered the Arab, "is not a man, but a tiger, a monster." "What is laid to his charge?" "A multitude of crimes: he has drenched himself in the blood of more than half a million of his subjects." "Have you ever seen him?" "No." "Well then, look up, it is the very man to whom you speak!" The Arab, without showing the least surprise, looked steadfastly at, and said haughtily to him, "and do you know who I am?" "No." "I belong to the family of Zobair, every one of whose descendants becomes a fool once in the year; this is my day." Hégiage smiled at so ingenious an excuse, and pardoned him.

A Gascon officer in the French army was speaking pretty loud to one of his comrades, as he was leaving him, he said in an important tone of voice, "I am going to dine with Villars." Marshal Villars, who then happened to pass within hearing, said mildly, "on account of my rank, and not on account of my merit, you should have said Mr. Villars." The Gascon, who little thought his general so near, replied unabashed, "well-a-day, nobody says Mr. Caesar, and I therefore thought it would be improper to speak of you as Mr. Villars."

Presence of mind seems to be particularly necessary in the commander of an army, not merely to obviate accidents in the midst of an action, but also in order to check the disorder of frightened troops, and when declining their duty, they are ripe for mutiny against their chief.

Ancient history mentions, that the army of Cyrus, in presence of that of Croesus, took for an ill-omen, a loud clap of thunder. This impression did not escape the penetration of Cyrus, his genius immediately suggested to him an interpretation of the presage, which spirited up his soldiery. "Friends," said he, "the Heavens declare for us: let us march on to the enemy; I hear the cry of victory; we follow thee, O great Jupiter!"

Lucullus being ready to give battle to Tigranes, he was remonstrated with, to dissuade him from it, that it was an unlucky day. "So much the better," said he, "we shall make it lucky by our victory."

We might become tedious in the mention of instances in which this valuable faculty has been eminently useful; but we could not advance one to its disparagement. At the outset we expressed our belief that it originates from a natural bias of the mind, with which but few are gifted, nevertheless, considerable approaches may be made by the most timid, if in the season of trial they will but aim at self-command. The most insignificant of insects, a moth or spider for instance, suddenly discovered on the person or even near it, has excited convulsive terror to such a degree, as to preclude the sufferer from exercising the slightest precaution to obviate the inconvenience; and yet occasions requiring nerve and energy have elicited corresponding vigour of purpose, when it has deliberately been roused into action. Possessing this degree of firmness, it should be the effort of every one to make it generally subservient to events as they arise, and thus attain some affinity to that valuable characteristic, presence of mind.

JANET.

Miscellaneous.

RECOLLECTIONS OF O'BRIEN, THE IRISH GIANT.

By a Northampton Tonsor.

It is now nearly forty years since this prodigy of nature first made his appearance in the town of Northampton. Like other great men, he occupied his travelling carriage, with this exception, that Mr. O'Brien's vehicle was certainly of a more lofty description. He then appeared to be in his seventeenth year, his features were regularly formed, his countenance remarkably healthful, and his standing position erect and commanding. The mildness of his temper was conspicuous, and he possessed intelligence of a superior order to that usually discovered by the individuals of the trade to which he was apprenticed—a bricklayer. His stature, eight feet seven inches, and three-fourths, did not make him appear disproportionate: in every respect he was a well-made man. At that period Mr. O'Brien became the guest of Mr. Page, the respected landlord of the George Inn, near to the parish church of All Saints. During his residence at this hospitable Inn, the honour devolved upon me to attend him in my official capacity of tonsor. After the exhibition of the day, and when the dwarfs of Northampton had retired to their cribs, this proud giant of the earth would take his morning walk, measuring with amazing strides, the distance between the George Inn and Queen's Cross. Although I considered myself a clever pedestrian at that period of my life, I found myself under the necessity of changing my walk into a run, in order to bear him company, Mr. O'Brien expressed himself as being greatly refreshed by these short excursions; they enabled him to enjoy refreshing sleep when he retired to his beds, for the common bed of humanity would have been useless, and therefore he had two joined together. Equal courage was combined with his strength, and he possessed, in the fullest degree, the warm temperament of an Irishman. An impertinent visitant excited his choler one day, during his residence here, by illiberal allusions to the land of his birth. The Phillistine was sensible of the insult, seized the prig by the collar, held him out at arm's length, and gave him three or four *mild* agitations, something after the manner of *Wallace*, the lion, with the famous *Billy*, of rat-killing memory. It taught the "*gentleman*" to respect his superior. Mr. O'Brien was visited by an immense number of per-

sons, who were astonished at his magnitude, and delighted by his manners. It is now upwards of thirty years since he last visited this place. His morning walk was then to some distance beyond Kingsthorpe; but "what a falling off was there" in his pedestrianism: he seemed like a pillar shaken by the wind; his conversation, however, was still instructive and humorous.

Mr. O'Brien enjoyed his early pipe, and the lamps of the town afforded him an easy method of lighting it. When at the door of Mr. Dent, in Bridge-street, he withdrew the cap of the lamp, whiffed his tobacco into a flame, and stalked away as if no uncommon event had taken place.

This gentleman was certainly the greatest friend that ever honoured us by his patronage. I have somewhat read of the danger of "taking a lion by the beard," but I have taken a giant by the nose, and shorn his bristling crop; and, as a memento of his esteem, one of the identical shoes that trod the pathway to Queen's Cross, has been suspended in my shop during a generation, whilst the giant frame and the mighty foot that was once its tenant, having long since mouldered into common dust.

LOUIS XIV.

THE Duchess d'Orleans gives two instances of hasty anger in Louis XIV. He once gave a caning to a servant, who not knowing him, opposed his entrance into a public garden. Another time, chancing to observe a thief picking the pocket of the Mareschal de Villars, the king fell upon him and drubbed him so severely, that the fellow hallooed out, "Au meurtre, au meurtre! on m'assomme!" to the great diversion of the whole court. Louis, however, as he had punished the rogue with his own hands, permitted him to exchange death for imprisonment.

* "Murder! murder! I'm a dead man!"

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